

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 S. Townsend Ave.
Montrose, CO 81401**

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2012-0009 EA

February 2013 Oil and Gas Lease Sale

Background

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) prepared an environmental assessment (DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2012-0009-EA) that analyzed the effects of the proposed lease sale of up to 22 parcels (29,890.818 acres) located in Gunnison and Delta Counties for the February 2013 Oil and Gas Lease Sale. The EA considered a range of alternatives including the Proposed Action, Preferred Alternative, and No Action.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the EA, I have determined that the Preferred Alternative with the mitigation measures will not have a significant effect on the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area.

Rationale

This FONSI is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

Context

The Preferred Alternative is a site-specific action directly involving the lease of approximately 20,555.458 acres of BLM administered land that by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance. The Preferred Alternative includes an area of the UFO around the communities of Paonia, Hotchkiss and Crawford. The economic activity is mainly coal mining, oil and gas development, livestock grazing, farm agriculture, recreation and residential development.

Intensity

The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Future development of the lease parcels may have minor indirect, short term impacts to resources (i.e. soils, vegetation, and wildlife) as described in Chapter 3 of the EA; however these impacts are not expected to be significant with the incorporation of mitigation measures and will be

further analyzed in site specific environmental analysis documents at the development stage.

2. The degree to which the action affects public health or safety.

The Preferred Alternative is not expected to significantly impact public health and safety. The effects of oil and gas leasing are well known and documented. Chapter 3 of the EA analyzes the effects to air and water quality which are not expected to be significant with the incorporation of mitigation measures. Oil and gas development is a common practice in the area and no significant impacts to health and safety are known.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

As shown in Chapter 3 of the EA, impacts to historic and cultural resources, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, and ecologically critical areas were all considered when analyzing the Preferred Alternative. As described in the EA, surveys for cultural resources prior to any development would avoid impacts to cultural and historical resources.

The following components of the human environment and resource issues are not affected because they are not present in the project area: park lands, prime farmlands, or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

Wetlands are present in the project area, however as described in Section 3.3.13 of the EA, there are no comprehensive lentic wetland inventories or documented lentic wetlands on the parcels. As described in Section 3.3.2 of the EA, a segment of Deep Creek, which crosses a parcel on private land, is eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System. There would not be significant impacts because of the mitigation measures designed to protect segment eligibility and potential classification.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be controversial.

The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. Oil and gas leasing has been occurring in an area primarily north and west of the Paonia Reservoir State Park and in the general area, and the effects of oil and gas leasing are generally well understood. In addition, mitigation measures as described in Chapter 3 of the EA could be incorporated into the selected action and would reduce anticipated impacts.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The BLM's Colorado State Office conducts quarterly competitive lease sales to sell available oil and gas lease parcels. Effects associated with leasing are well known and documented. Oil and gas leasing has been occurring in the area primarily north and west of the Paonia Reservoir State Park and the effects are generally well understood. NEPA documents at the development stage will incorporate all new information to analyze site-specific impacts of proposed development.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The Preferred Alternative is within the scope of the current Uncompahgre Basin Resource Management Plan (RMP) and is not expected to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. The selected alternative was considered by the interdisciplinary team within the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete analysis of the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the selected alternative and all other alternatives is described in Chapter 3 of the EA.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

The interdisciplinary team evaluated the possible actions in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete disclosure of the effects of the selected alternative is contained in Chapter 3 of the EA.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

The Preferred Alternative will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will it cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. A cultural inventory would be completed before any development and/or consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office would be completed in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act on cultural resources.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA of 1973.

Mitigating measures to reduce impacts to listed species have been incorporated into the Preferred Alternative. All parcels would be subject to lease stipulation CO-34 to alert the lessee of potential habitat for threatened, endangered, candidate or other special status plants or animals. To reduce the potential environmental effects to Bald Eagles if development were to occur, lease stipulation UB-03 would be applied to parcels 6623, 6624, 6605, 6610, 6614, 6616, and 6617; also lease notice UFO-LN-14 would apply to Bald Eagle winter roost sites associated with parcel 6610.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The Preferred Alternative does not violate any known federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. Federal, state, local, and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process. Furthermore, letters were sent to interested publics and Native American tribes. In addition, the project is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs (as described in Sections 2.5 and 2.6 of the EA).

Determination

This FONSI is based on the information contained in the EA and my consideration of criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27). It is my determination that: 1) the implementation of the Preferred Alternative will not have significant environmental impacts; 2) the Preferred Alternative is in conformance with the Uncompahgre Basin RMP; and 3) the Preferred Alternative does not constitute a major federal action having significant effects on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

Approved:

Lonny R Bagley
DSD, Energy, Lands & Minerals
Bureau of Land Management
Colorado State Office
Division of Energy, Lands & Minerals

Date